

report by the Institute of Medicine on medication errors found that safe staffing and limits on mandatory overtime are essential components to preventing medication errors. An investigative report by the Chicago Tribune also found that patient safety was sacrificed when reductions in hospital staff resulted in registered nurses working long overtime hours and being more likely to make serious medical errors.

Mr. Speaker, these studies confirm the grim stories I hear from my constituents on a regular basis. In fact, last October 1,900 people participated in a 1-day strike at Rhode Island Hospital which illustrated the magnitude of this problem facing Rhode Island nurses, hospitals and patients.

I understand that hospitals need an ample supply of nurses to safely administer patient needs, and they are not to blame for our Nation's nursing shortages. But with nurses within the Lifespan Hospital network in my State working 180,000 hours of overtime, the equivalent of 22,500 extra 8-hour shifts last year, I cannot understand why Congress does not act now to stop this injustice which risks the lives of thousands of Americans each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, what happened in Rhode Island is happening across America. That is why I urge my colleagues to join the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS), the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), and me in ensuring expedient passage of both of these bills to help our hard-working nurses and to improve the kind of quality of health care that Americans expect and deserve.

#### ESTATE TAX RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today as a strong supporter of reforming estate tax. In the past 2½ years, I have voted for estate tax reform almost every time it was offered on this floor. I even voted to override President Clinton's veto of the bill.

But since then there have been significant changes in our economy and in the tax proposals before this body. This administration, the Bush administration, has put all of its political muscle behind a \$1.6 trillion tax cut. The House has already used \$958 billion of this amount by approving income tax rate cuts, and we have used an additional \$399 billion to fix the marriage penalty and phase in an increase in the child tax credit. Together, these bills have chewed up more than \$1.36 trillion, 84 percent of the total tax cut proposed by the President.

Mr. Speaker, I will say right now that I think the administration's overall proposal is too large. It is too large because we do not know whether to-

day's surpluses will be there tomorrow, and there are other tax changes which are sure to come before this body which will cost billions more.

What are we going to do to correct the problems associated with the alternative minimum tax? What are we going to do about making permanent the R&D tax credit? What do we do about fixing other unfair aspects of the Tax Code, like reinstating the sales tax deduction?

If we want to talk about real unfairness, let us reinstate sales tax deductibility to establish fairness for Washington State residents and the residents of six other States who have no income tax but pay sales taxes and cannot deduct them from their Federal return.

Today's bill should also be about fairness. The estate tax should not burden small business, small farms and individuals who have accumulated sizable assets through years of hard work. I am frustrated that some in Congress are playing numbers games because this bill that we passed today does not solve the problem quickly enough for many folks in my district. The bulk of the estate tax bill that we passed today will not be felt for 10 years. Then what happens in 10 years? The baby boom generation retires, and we have increases in our needs for Social Security and Medicare.

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It is unclear to me why the majority has not and will not look at other legislative proposals to solve the estate tax problems. I am frustrated with the "my way or the highway" approach that they have taken. That is why earlier today I voted against the rule on this bill. We should have had more and better options to choose from. It should not just be a coin toss.

The Democrats put forward a bill that would take care of the estate problem today for more than 99 percent of all Americans. I do not think that bill was perfect, but I think it contained some good ideas. And I do think if we took the best parts of the Republican bill, the best parts of the Democratic bill, cleaned up some problems, we could have had something we all supported. But that does not seem to be the way we do business around here these days.

When I came to this body, we elected a Speaker who pledged bipartisan; we elected a President recently who pledged bipartisanship, but we are not seeing it. Here was an opportunity for true bipartisanship, to get together, draw the best of both bills from both parties and come up with a real solution.

Mr. Speaker, this takes a personal note for me. A month and a half ago my father passed away. One of the last things he said to me, quite literally one of the last things, was, "Son, I'm

concerned about repealing the estate tax. I worry that we risk concentrating wealth too heavily in this country."

Two days ago I met with the owners of a Toyota dealership who told me, "Congressman, we are concerned that if we have too exorbitant an estate tax, we won't be able to pass our dealership on to our kids and their families." I met with George and Peggy Thoeni, family farmers in my district, who have worked their whole life to build a family farm, and they want to pass that on to their children.

Mr. Speaker, my father was right. So are George and Peggy Thoeni, and so are Marvin and Shirley McChord. We desperately need to reform the estate tax, but we must not do so in a way that concentrates wealth inordinately in our country and jeopardizes our financial future.

Today, I voted for both the Democratic alternative and for final passage on the final bill, but we could have done better, Mr. Speaker. In true bipartisanship we could have come together, before the bills came here, and we could have crafted something that protects family businesses and small farms today, not 10 years down the road; that does not add new burdensome regulatory complications to the Tax Code; that does not allow the very, very wealthiest people in this country to pass their estates on with no tax burden whatsoever. We could have done that, but we did not.

I would hope that before this bill finally becomes law, we do come together in genuine bipartisanship. In so doing we would honor the wishes of both my father, of George and Peggy Thoeni and the McChords. Let us do this together, and let us do it right. The people deserve our doing so.

#### SPY PLANE STANDOFF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, the South China Sea has always been an area of constant stress for our men and women in military uniforms, especially the cat-and-dog fights that have gone on, really for many of the past years. That is why an accident was bound to happen.

China believes the U.S. plane caused the collision by making an abrupt turn while two Chinese fighter pilots shadowed it. Give me a break. The EP-3 is a lumbering turtle, while the Chinese J8s respond like nimble jackrabbits. Colin Powell has stated, "A tragic accident took place. We regret that the Chinese plane did not get down safely. We regret the loss of life of the Chinese pilot, but now we need to move on. We need to bring this to a resolution."

Make no mistake, the planes were operating in international airspace. By

international law, the EP-3 is sovereign U.S. territory.

Earlier today two U.S. diplomats were allowed to visit 24 U.S. crew members. The detained Americans looked healthy, but China has given no indication as to when they may be released. Among these are two Illinoisans, Seaman Jeremy Crandall of Poplar Grove, Illinois, and Sergeant Mitchell Pray of Geneseo, Illinois.

The Chinese Government is treating this like we are still in the Cold War, and we are not. Our concern is we do not want this to turn into another period of constant tension and struggle and a return back to the Cold War era. But make no mistake, the United States is not a Nation to be trifled with, and our patience will only last so long. We need our crew back, we need our plane back, and we need to return to normalized relations with China. The best way to do that is for the peaceful return of both our crew members and our plane.

#### BRANDON FUNK OF SHOW LOW, ARIZONA, BEING HELD BY PRC

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I come to the well of this House this afternoon to invoke the name of Brandon Funk of Show Low, Arizona, and 23 others, our men and women in uniform, being detained by the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Speaker, our President has been clear and unequivocal. In addressing the Communist Chinese regime, he has said simply, "Let our people go now and return our plane." I support the President, as does this House, united with one voice, not a voice of Republicans or of Democrats, but one voice as Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I would appeal to the Chinese Government to understand what is at stake. They should not underestimate the resolve of the American people, and they should not mistake the genial nature of our new Commander-in-Chief or the gentility he brings to his job as a lack of resolve.

With each passing day, the People's Republic of China is placing in jeopardy its place among the community of nations, its status as an economic power, its opportunity to highlight and showcase some of the world's great events. There is a clear choice to be made.

There are a number of options available to our Nation. Mr. Speaker, I do not come here to try to abridge or in any way describe the actions our Commander-in-Chief can take, but they are numerous, with serious repercussions for the Chinese regime in Beijing.

Mr. Speaker, again I would ask the Chinese Government not to underesti-

mate the United States of America. Secretary of State Powell struck the proper note yesterday when he offered regret over the loss of life.

The preceding speaker, the gentleman from Illinois, made it quite clear that the EP-3 surveillance plane is not a readily maneuverable craft. It does not reach supersonic speeds, with its propeller drive. Sadly, the Chinese Government chose to scramble fighters, supersonic aircraft, in pursuit of this sovereign American plane over international airspace.

As our commander-in-chief in the Pacific noted over the weekend, it is dangerous to try and play bumper cars aloft. We should commend the skill of the American pilot, who, with a severely damaged aircraft and, in what we understand now was a rapid descent, a fall of close to 8,000 feet, had the wherewithal to be able to land the aircraft, albeit in Chinese territory.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the Sino-American dictionary that is employed here should be content with the expression of regret. But, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the People's Republic of China that there is nothing in this incident that the United States of America should even begin to apologize for. Are we to throw out rules of international conduct? Are we to ignore the law of sovereignty regarding open airspace? Are we to sit by with muted complaint based on the damage to our aircraft?

Mr. Speaker, I think America speaks with one voice. I am concerned about my constituent. Brandon Funk of Show Low completed his high school degree in 3½ years; such was his desire to serve America in the military. Mr. Speaker, to Brandon and the 23 others, I say, remain strong, because the Nation you serve will do likewise.

#### OUR SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN IN CHINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the situation developing in the People's Republic of China with respect to our servicemen and women.

On April 1, one of our Navy's EP-3s was involved in a midair collision with a Chinese fighter craft. Tragically, it seems that the life of the Chinese pilot was lost when his fighter crashed into the sea. Our plane was forced to make an emergency landing in the People's Republic of China. What could simply have been an accident has now spiraled into an international incident because of the PRC's unreasonableness.

Mr. Speaker, international law dictates that the PRC should not have entered our plane as it constitutes sovereign territory. This was ignored.

Even after offering our regrets for the loss of their pilot and explicitly offering our assistance in the search, the PRC demands an apology.

Mr. Speaker, we have offered our regrets. We have continually, over the past 8 years, time and again, shown patience with unreasonable demands put forth by the PRC. The time has come when we, as a House, should stand firm with the President and support his actions with respect to the PRC. No longer should we shrink at the prospect of standing for what is right.

Mr. Speaker, the Chinese still are in possession of our pilots. It is time that they must do what is right. The PRC must release our servicemen now, before they are perceived as hostages of a foreign nation, for that is what they will be if they are not returned in a timely manner. Should the PRC wish to engage in a timely dialogue in the future, it must take constructive actions now. It must return our plane and return our servicemen and women.

Mr. Speaker, politics should stop at the water's edge. We need to support our President.

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#### A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE MIKAN: MR. BASKETBALL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GRAVES). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. RAMSTAD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a true Minnesota legend. George Mikan, who was acclaimed Mr. Basketball in 1950 for his remarkable performances at DePaul University and with the former Minneapolis Lakers of the National Basketball Association has reached legendary status in the game of basketball and in life because of his hard work, integrity, leadership and character.

George Mikan will be honored at a nationally televised halftime ceremony during next Sunday's NBA game between the Los Angeles Lakers and the Minnesota Timberwolves. A life-sized bronze statue of George Mikan will be unveiled at the Target Center in Minneapolis. It will be a special moment for a truly special man who is most deserving of this recognition.

At 6 feet 10 inches tall, George Mikan was the first big man to display the agility, touch and skill to dominate basketball games. He was called the trunk of the NBA family tree and he helped the fledgling league draw record crowds in every city. Mikan's mere presence changed the rules of the game because he was so dominant. In fact, in an effort to stop George Mikan, the Mikan rule was invented which widened the lane underneath the basket.

With Mikan in the middle, the Minneapolis Lakers won six NBA championships in the late 1940s and early